

Sonnets as Scripts: Students Close Read Any Poem

Breaking a sonnet down into phrases and presenting it dramatically can help students to listen to the words and follow the thought of the poem. Put your students into groups, have them select a sonnet or you can assign them one, and have them work out a script. Here's an example of a script for Sonnet 65.

Amy: Since brass, nor stone,
Javi: nor earth,
Keisha: nor boundless sea
Zak: But sad mortality o'ersways their power,
Dan: How
ALL: with this rage
Amy: shall beauty hold a plea,
Jack: Whose action is no stronger than a flower?

Zak: O, how shall summer's
Dan: honey breath hold out
Javi: Against the wrackful siege of batt'ring days,
Keisha: When rocks impregnable are not so stout
Amy: Nor gates of steel so strong, but Time decays?

ALL: O, fearful meditation!
Javi: Where, alack,
Keisha: Shall Time's best jewel from Time's chest lie hid?
Jack: Or what strong hand can hold his swift foot back,
Amy: Or who his spoil of beauty can forbid?

ALL: O, none,
Javi and Amy: unless this miracle have might,
That in black ink my love may still shine bright.

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Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea
But sad mortality o'ersways their power,
How with this rage shall beauty hold a plea,
Whose action is no stronger than a flower? 4
O, how shall summer's honey breath hold out
Against the wrackful siege of batt'ring days,
When rocks impregnable are not so stout
Nor gates of steel so strong, but Time decays? 8
O, fearful meditation! Where, alack,
Shall Time's best jewel from Time's chest lie hid?
Or what strong hand can hold his swift foot back,
Or who his spoil of beauty can forbid? 12
O, none, unless this miracle have might,
That in black ink my love may still shine bright.